(b) the sector-wise distribution of these workers differentiating them by the type of work in tobacco sector;

(c) whether Government have taken steps to protect their level of employment; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) The number of workers in the tobacco economy sector-wise in A.P. is estimated as under:—

	lakh
1. Production including grading at farm level	14.5
2. Handling operations by the buyers including regarding	0.4
3. Redrying/threshing operations	0.7
	15.0

(c) and (d) With the objective of protecting employment in this sector, Government through Tobacco Board is taking all possible steps to promote exports of tobacco and tobacco products.

Competition to Indian Tobacco Exports

1816. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India is facing competition from other tobacco growing countries for tobacco exports;

(b) if so, what are the names of countries which are fast becoming major competitors of Indian tobacco; and

(c) the steps being taken to protect the tobacco exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The major competitors of Indian tobacco are Brazil, Zimbabwe, China, Greece, Italy, Argentina, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Malawi etc.

(c) Steps being taken to protect our tobacco exports include:

(i) Reorientation of production and developmental strategies to meet the challenge of the changing international scenario.

(ii) Enhancing quality and productivity levels of Indian tobacco so as to make it price competitive in international markets.

(iii) Expanding the base of quality tobacco in light soils by identification of suitable new areas.

(iv) Production of low tar and low Nicotine tobaccos.

(v) Elimination of unsuitable areas for tobacco cultivation.

(vi) Improving grading standards at firm level.

(vii) Provision of long term credit for export of tobacco.

(viii) Stengthening of existing markets and exploring new markets through sponsoring delegations, inviting delegations from abroad participation in international fairs and exhibitions.

(ix) Inclusion of tobacco in bilateral trade agreement.

(x) Encouraging Indian exporters to establish Indian own warehouses for stock and sale of tobacco and cigarettes in CIS countries.

(xi) Bringing in economy in curing costs and thus reduce the unit cost of production.

(xii) Allowing foreign investment in the areas of cigarette manufacturing mainly for export of cigarettes.

(xiii) Promoting 100 per cent EOUs for export of cigarettes.

Irregularities in export credit interest subsidy scheme, 1968

1817. SHRI AJIT P. K. JOGI:
SHRI RAM GOPAL YADAV:
Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has pointed out some irregularities committed in the Export Credit (Interest Subsidy) Scheme, 1968;